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AUTHOR Lancaster, Mary K.
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ABSTRACT

Transracial adoption, especially the adoption of black children by whites, is a deep and divisive social issue. Critics note the untapped potential for black families to adopt black children and the unaddressed conditions that bring black children to higher incidence of foster care placement. They emphasize the inability of white parents to adequately develop black children's racial identification and promote skills for surviving in a racist society. They also note the need to deal with issues that bring minority and poor children into foster care in the first place. Supporters argue that the number of black children available for adoption far exceeds the pool of black adopters and note the lack of empirical evidence suggesting that transracial adoption harms minority children. They emphasize the harm done to children who have extended stays in foster homes awaiting placement with black families. A significant yet often overlooked aspect of transracial adoption is the history of deep-rooted racial tension between blacks and whites. Some ethical considerations to examine include the values of equality of opportunity for children versus community, interracial community versus multiculturalism (community preservation versus integration), and a child's individuality versus racial/ethnic community. (Contains 14 references.) (SM)

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THE TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION DEBATE IN THE UNITED STATES

MS. MARY K. LANCASTER
MONROE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
KEY COLONY BEACH, FLORIDA

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The Transracial Adoption Debate in the United States

> Transracial adoption is no panacea for the problems of family deterioration among nonwhite minorities in the United States, but its success suggests that it may be a useful resource. The highly desirable efforts to expand inracial placement for minority children do not require the cessation of transracial placements. Moreover, so long as the number of minority children needing permanent homes exceed the number of minority families able to accept them, transracial placement is a resource that should not be ignored.[1]

Introduction

The issue of transracial adoption, especially the adoption of Black children by Whites, is a social issue that is both deep and divisive. It is difficult to discuss the issue without mention of what some consider to be the broader issues of child welfare and the conditions that bring Black and impoverished children into the child welfare system. Although the two issues are systemically different, their origins are so intertwined and historically explosive

[1] A. Silverman, "Outcomes of Transracial Adoption," *The Future of Children* 3 (Spring, 1993): 117.

that they are commonly discussed in the same cause-relationship context.

One cannot deny that inherent in transracial adoption is a deep-seated ethical conflict. Yet a successful resolution–one that does not deny the validity of the values with which it conflicts—is possible. The central question in the debate over transracial adoption is whether agencies should consider the race of the child and the race of the prospective adoptors when making placement decisions. The issue, however, must be considered within the context of the current situation surrounding adoption and adoptable children (i.e., a disproportion between the number of White children available for adoption and the White parents wishing to adopt and a high incidence of minority children awaiting placement).

A Historical Perspective on Transracial Adoption

Prior to the 1960s, adoption across color or racial lines was relatively uncommon even though many U. S. families already had mixed Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American ancestry. The segregated lines of U. S. society, Jim Crow laws and

racial prejudice led to White suspicion of interracial families.[2] The 1960s and 1970s, however, witnessed a substantial increase in the number of children of ethnic minority groups who were adopted by Caucasian parents. This increase was due, in part, to the lack of healthy White infants available for adoption, an altruistic desire by Caucasian parents to provide permanence for children who might otherwise grow up in foster homes or institutions, and a desire by Caucasian families to intervene to help reduce racism and prejudice through the integration of their own families.[3]

Accompanying the increase in transracial adoption was a strong criticism against the practices of transracial adoption and transracial foster care placement voiced by the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW). In a 1972 resolution to condemn the practice of transracial placement, the association cited several grounds including the argument that Black children could not develop a Black pride and identity if they

[2] J. Smith, "Analyzing Ethical Conflict in the Transracial Adoption Debate: Three Conflicts Involving Community," *Hypatia* 11 (Spring 1996): 1-33.

[3] L. Hollingsworth, "Effect of Transracial/Transethnic Adoption on Children's Racial and Ethnic Identity and Self-esteem" *Marriage and Family Review* 25 (1997): 99-130.

were raised by Whites. Additional concerns were related to the underutilization of potential African American adoptors.[4]

The NABSW position resulted in an immediate and swift reaction by adoption agencies: almost immediately all transracial adoptions all but ceased. This position was strengthened by the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act which established federal standards governing the removal of Native American children from their families. At the same time separate programs, and in some cases separate agencies, were established to encourage adoption of African American children by African American families.[5]

Since then, transracial placement of Black children has remained low either because social workers disapprove or fear those who do. "In the 1980s and 1990s no official U. S. federal policy barred transracial adoption. But some states have adoption guidelines or regulations about race, ethnicity, and language for social service agencies to follow."[6]

The position of the NABSW was not without opposition, however. Their criticism of transracial adoption was met with the

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[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Smith, p. 5.

response from advocates that such children benefit more from the stability that permanent placement brings, regardless of the color or race of the adoptors. In fact, advocates accused agencies of discrimination when they insisted upon racial matching, suggesting that delays caused by waiting for same-race adoptors decreased the potential for a permanent adoptive home. Legal challenges by some Caucasian parents, especially those who had been foster parents for African American children but who had been restricted by public or private policy from adopting them, ultimately resulted in the Multi-ethnic Placement Act of 1994, which was amended and strengthened in 1996. This act prohibits agencies that receive federal assistance from delaying or denying placement based on the race, color, or national origin of the child or the foster or adoptive parents involved but does allow those considerations to be a factor in making a placement decision. Experience with the law will undoubtedly determine its application from a practical standpoint and its results for children.[7]

[7] L. Hollingsworth, "Promoting Same-Race Adoption for Children of Color," *Social Work* 43 (March 1998): 104-17.

Criticisms of Transracial Adoption

. Critics of transracial adoption challenge weaknesses in both its concept and practice. The primary criticisms aimed at the concept of transracial adoption are (a) the untapped potential for Black families to adopt Black children and (b) the unaddressed conditions that bring Black children to higher incidence of foster care placement. The primary criticism aimed at the practice of transracial adoption relates to the inability of White parents, no matter how well intentioned, to address the need for Black children to develop racial identification and to acquire skills to survive in a racist society. Successful adaptation and preparation for future well-being involves more than high self-esteem; it also involves a feeling of belongingness that comes from a comfortable fit in the family, community, and society.[8]

Studies that show a high level of emotional adjustment by transracially adopted children have a number of shortcomings, the

[8] P. Hayes, "The Ideological Attack on Transracial Adoption in the United States and Britain," *International Journal of Law and the Family* 9 (April 1995): 1-22; Smith; R. Taylor and M. Thornton, "Child Welfare and Transracial Adoption," *Journal of Black Psychology* 22 (May 1996): 282-92; and others.

critics argue.[9] Such shortcomings include responses obtained from adoptive parents rather than the adopted persons (which suggest the possibility of an overly optimistic viewpoint); longitudinal studies with a high degree of subject attrition (which suggest the possibility of unsuccessful adoptive experience); methodology that presumes correlation between racial identity and self-esteem; social scientific research methodology that approaches measurement and evaluation with a Eurocentric view of the world, especially when it utilizes White middle-class standards that may not be appropriate for minority group children; and invalid statistical conclusions.[10]

The need for transracial adoption, critics suggest,[11] would be greatly reduced if adequate measures were taken to address the conditions that bring minority group and impoverished children into foster care in the first place and to effectively solicit minority

[9] Hollingsworth, 1997; M. Lovett-Tisdale and B. Purnell, "It Takes an Entire Village," *Journal of Black Psychology* 22 (May 1996): 266-70; Taylor and Thornton.

[10] Hollingsworth, 1997; Lovett-Tisdale and Purnell; Taylor and Thornton.

[11] Hollingsworth, 1997; Hollingsworth, 1998; Lovett-Tisdale and Purnell.

group foster and adoptive parents to help the children who are in care.

However, some opponents admit, Caucasian parents who have adopted children of color and provided them with love and stability should not be demonized and many manifest a personal commitment to improving conditions for all children.[12]

Supports of Transracial Adoption

Most professionals and legislators have acknowledged that same-race adoptions are desirable and preferable for children. Many even accept the validity of some of the criticisms aimed at transracial adoption. Nevertheless, proponents argue, the number of Black children available for adoption far exceeds the pool of Black adoptors and the lack of empirical evidence suggesting that transracial adoption is harmful to minority group children is a strong support when viewed against the positive effects of permanency for children.[13]

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[12] M. Courtney, "The Politics and Realities of Transracial Adoption," *Child Welfare* 76 (Nov/Dec 1997): 749-80.

[13] Smith.

Many Black children awaiting adoption face one of two realities: extended stays in foster homes awaiting placement with available Black families or more prompt placement in White families. Delays in placement have two major effects. One, they lessen a child's likelihood of adoptive placement as adoptors have traditionally preferred infants and toddlers. And, two, they increase the likelihood of additional psychological and social developmental damage to the child due to longer periods of instability and greater likelihood of broken relationships caused by multiple foster home placements.[14]

A number of proponents of transracial adoption[15] cite the empirical data as evidence of the successes of transracial adoption and suggest that it is naive to think that policies which keep Black children from White families will somehow protect them from racism. To the contrary, Bagley suggests, transracially adoptive parents are often educated, enlightened persons with friends and colleagues of many races and ethnicities, intercultural interests and

[14] R. Alexander and C. Curtis, "A Review of Empirical Research Involving the Transracial Adoption of African American Children," *Journal of Black Psychology* 22 (May 1996): 223-30; C. Bagley, "Transracial Adoption in Britain: A Follow-up Study, with Policy Considerations," *Child Welfare* 72 (May/June 1993): 285-300; R. Simon, "Transracial Adoptions: Experiences of a Twenty-Year Study," *American Sociologist* 27 (September 1, 1996): 79-90.

[15] Ibid.

contacts, and a genuine concern for the welfare of their transracially adopted children.[16]

Further, the argument can be made that, despite a history of racial oppression in the United States and elsewhere, the phenomenon of transracial adoption is more strongly related to majority and minority populations and the supply-and-demand economy of adoptors and available children than it is to a more narrowly identified tie to racial dominance. In the Northwest Territory and the Yukon province of Canada, regions where Caucasians are a small minority of the total population, the adoption of White children by members of other ethnic groups, such as Native and Inuit families, is common.[17]

Confronting the Ideological Attack on Transracial Adoption

The policy in favor of transracial adoption has been successfully attacked in both the United States and Britain. In defense of transracial adoption Hayes cites the vast majority of empirical evidence that suggests that transracial adoptions are as successful as in-racial adoptions and, further, that White parents

[16] Bagley.

[17] Ibid.

who fulfill the list of requirements set forth by opponents regarding parenting techniques are no more likely to be successful than those who do not.[18]

Despite this evidence, Hayes argues, critics continue to defend their position in a forceful, persuasive and seemingly scientific manner. Hayes cites examples of what he sees as weak reasoning presented by critics to include the following:

- Distorting the adoption research to suggest that genuine problems that are unrelated to transracial adoption, such as ill-treatment suffered in institutional care, are actually caused by transracial adoption;
- Using one particular research finding as a point of departure into the argument against transracial adoption, such as using evidence that supports a weaker sense of ethnic identity in transracially adopted children than in in-racially adopted children and concluding that this weak sense of ethnic identity is a problem in itself despite the data that suggests the individual is otherwise well-adjusted;
- Distorting a "color-blind" philosophy held by some adoptive parents that suggests people ought not be discriminated against on the basis of their color by implying that the adoptive parents believe that people are not discriminated against on the basis of color;
- Illogically deducing that research findings which support good mental health are either

[18] Hayes.

> illusory, short-sighted, masking an underlying reality of a painful lack of identity, or inappropriately measuring "success."[19]

The strongest, yet most effective, unsupported criticism of transracial adoption, he suggests, is the confident prediction that although children may appear to be well-adjusted, the ill effects of a color-blind philosophy or a parent's whiteness will surface at some point in the future. The advantage to making this claim in a court case, Hayes suggests, is that it cannot be empirically evaluated directly and, furthermore, evidence that a child thrived in the care of White parents (foster parents, for example) is made to seem irrelevant.[20]

Further arguments which are frequently advanced in professional literature are the claims that due to a history of racism in the United States, all or almost all Whites are racist and their transracially adopted children will suffer even more discrimination as a result; the minority community has a claim in determining the future of a minority child and "the community" is united in its opposition to transracial adoption; and the campaign against

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

transracial adoption must be waged through power rather than through reason.[21]

A History of Deep-Rooted Racial Tension

One of the most significant, yet often overlooked, aspects of transracial adoption is the history of deep-rooted racial tension between Blacks and Whites. While these may seem trivial to some when compared to the welfare of a child, the realities of White domination and the failure to recognize Blacks as full members of society contribute to underlying distrust by Blacks of the social system of transracial adoption. Add to these the history of racism, the ways in which race and privilege interact, and how these have specifically affected adoption, mothering, and parenting relations. Under slavery, for example, Black children were systematically taken from their families and, in many cases, deliberately sold away from their families. Natal alienation, that is the loss and denial of information about parental and ancestral lineages, became a central defining condition of U. S. slavery.[22]

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Smith.

The lack of social symmetry between relations of White children to Black parents and Black children to White parents emerges as yet another important issue. Such a lack of symmetry negates the pre-assumed neutral meaning of "transracial adoption" when, in fact, the parallel adoption of White children by Blacks is relatively uncommon. The deep assumptions of White entitlement and the moral issues of asymmetries in power and perception suggest the notion in the minds of some Whites that it would be to the advantage of Black children to be raised by Whites. Black adoptions of White children, rare as they are, recalls the history of Black women's slave and servant labor as well as the more recent employment of Black women as domestics and children's caretakers for White employers.[23]

One must wonder about the procedures that would be established given a reversal of the situation, i.e., a crisis in the White community in which large numbers of White children were languishing in foster care and facing the prospect of adoption by Black families. Would all resources be mobilized to make sure those children were placed with White families rather than sending them to the Black community?

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[23] Ibid.

Ethical Considerations

Smith identifies ethical conflicts as one of the primary concerns in transracial adoption, especially the adoption of Black children by Whites. As an analysis of the on-going debate over racial matching, she focuses on the ethical issues related to community. Her approach illuminates the deeper sources in some of the tensions in the disputes, the historical tensions related to the parenting of Black children by Whites.[24] The underlying conflicts Smith identifies are the values of equality of opportunity versus community; interracial community versus multiculturalism; and a child's individuality versus racial-ethnic community. These ethical considerations will be addressed below.

Equal Opportunity for Children

The norm of equality as it relates to transracial adoption is invoked to prevent major structural differences in treatment from undermining or actually harming children.

> In the life of children...we must recognize the psychological and social prerequisites and stepping stones in building a healthy basis for one's sense of one's worth, one's trust in human relations, and one's sense of the cohesiveness of one's aims in a

[24] Ibid.

> relatively stable world. These prerequisites are satisfied in part by stable parenting...To deny a child these goods when they are available is to deny the child the basis for a mature adult adjustment, and therefore for full participation in political life and citizenship.[25]

Any criteria, such as racial matching, that serves to postpone stable parenting for children due to their racial identity, is seen to violate rights for children.

The Value of Community Preservation

The idea that equality should be served, but under the rubric of community, not individualism, is another important issue. This idea is supported by a norm respecting the ongoing preservation of religious, racial, and ethnic communities which is supported generally in the United States. Application of this norm deals directly with community control over children and the implication that children's interests and community interests are so intertwined as to make separation almost impossible. The logical extension, then, is that if the wishes of a certain ethnic group are to bar placement outside the group, that is the process of self-

[25] Ibid., p.13.

determination based on their striving to preserve themselves as a community.[26]

The Value of Integration

Inherent in the value of integration are the conflicting norms of interracial community and multiculturism. An interracial community allows for different ways for persons of different backgrounds to relate to each other; multiculturalism affirms the positive value of distinctive racial and ethnic communities. Interracial community suggests a melting pot in which all children have the ability to navigate bonds and interracial routes to friendships. Social intercourse among different racial communities becomes an advantage under the interracial community view. Multiculturism, on the other hand, suggests an active, even vibrant, culture that persists from one generation to the next. This is more than a "museum culture" in that it entails preserving living organic cultures that are integrated as a whole into the next generation.[27]

[26] Smith.

[27] Ibid.

The Child as an Individual

The question as to the welfare of children in need of adoption is an urgent one. Any delay in placement jeopardizes the child's chances for adoption, successful adaptation once an adoption does occur, and normal process of psychological and social development.

Two significant psychological phenomena occur during the early phases of childhood and are affected by impermanence: bonding and attachment. Bonding is the development of a close parent-child relationship. Entitlement extends beyond a parent assuming legal responsibility for the welfare of a child: it includes a feeling that the parent has a spiritual right to love, nurture, and protect the welfare of the child.[28]

Simply put, bonding is the trust that the child has in the parent and attachment is mutual and affection between parent and child.[29]

In normal development, attachment generally occurs between the ages of about six months to eighteen months and builds the foundation for trust in later relationships. The loss of a

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[28] K. Lancaster, *Keys to Adopting a Child*, (Hauppauge, NJ: Barron's Educational Series, 1994).

[29] K. Lancaster, *Keys to Parenting an Adopted Child*, (Hauppauge, NJ: Barron's Educational Series, 1996).

bonded relationship in the early phases of childhood undermines attachment and poses the risk of attachment disorders. Many children's advocates feel that if anything is owed to children, it is owed to them in these early phases of life. It is also important to note from a child-centered moral viewpoint that developmental time cannot be measured in chronological time: eighteen months in the life of an infant may be more comparable in overall impact to eighteen years at the mature stages of life.[30]

The Child as a Member of a Racial-Ethic Community

Despite certain weaknesses in methodology, a number of studies[31] indicate that transracially adopted children do as well emotionally as their non-adopted brothers and sisters and generally as well as inracially adopted minority children.[32] While many opponents accept the studies that measure and report healthy self-esteem rates of transracially adopted children, they challenge the conclusions related to racial and ethnic identity, that is, an individual's acquisition of group patterns.

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[30] Smith.

[31] See Alexander and Curtis; Simon.

[32] See Hollingsworth, 1997.

Taylor and Thornton suggest that proponents of transracial adoption fail to understand that the continuing processes of racial socialization are not trivial The socialization process for minority children is a critical process, one that usually falls to the family but extends throughout a person's lifetime. It is within the family context that a minority child first becomes aware of and begins to grapple with the significance of racism and discrimination; thus, parents of Black children must act as a buffer between their offspring and society and must function as both a filter of societal information and the primary interpreter of the social structure. Most importantly, they stress, the processes of socialization to racial concerns is a challenge for even Black parents; the lack of empirical research about the processes results in an even greater challenge to White adoptive parents, many of whom may consciously or unconsciously reject a view of American culture as being racially stratified.[33]

The Multicultural, Multiracial Family

While policies related to transracial adoption can attempt to resolve many of the conflicting viewpoints, the actual day-to-day

[33] Taylor and Thornton.

parenting of transracial children cannot be legislated. Adults can, and should, choose for their children in ways that secure the prospect of the development of strong self-esteem and expanded adult choices. This may, for some Black birthparents, mean the choice of White families to parent their children. If that decision is based on an open, reasoned choice, perhaps some of the issues detailed above may be mitigated. If because of poverty, the choice is made based on the perception that White parents may provide a more socially and economically privileged environment, the tensions and difficulties mentioned here may recur.

Parents who choose to adopt across ethnic or racial lines should be aware of the increased difficulties that their children face and make a lifetime commitment to helping their children adjust. Time and again, studies have shown that transracially adopted children do well in measures of self-esteem. The challenge comes in (a) the recognition by adoptive parents that it is important for minority group children to also develop a strong racial identity and (b) the successful attempts that parents of transracially adopted

children make at providing their children with opportunities to achieve that racial identity.[34]

The availability of additional data for transracial adoptors would also be beneficial in helping their children adjust. These include (a) the identification of those qualities which are necessary for surviving in a society in which racism exists, (b) the delineation of the components of a healthy sense of self as a Black person, and (c) research findings regarding the factors (living in a well-integrated neighborhood, attending well-integrated schools, participation as a family in activities that involve large numbers of persons of the same racial or ethnic group as the transracially adopted child, and family friendships with persons of various races and ethnicities, for example) that contribute to healthy self-esteem and racial identity formulation.

Finding Common Ground

Clearly, opponents and proponents of transracial adoption are united in one aspect, and that is children's advocacy. Their division comes in the challenge of formulating a policy that meets the needs of the plurality (what all children need) while

[34] Lancaster, 1996.

safeguarding the needs of the individual (what some children need).

While that analogy may, on the surface, seem simplistic, a review of common ground of the two camps may prove supportive. First, most would agree in the critical nature of permanency for children, that stable parenting and, when out-of-home placement is necessary, early placement are key elements in the development of children. Second, most would also agree to the importance of cultural preservation both for the individual member and for the racial-ethnic community. Third, most generally favor placing children in racially or ethnically matched families. Furtner, most would also agree in the importance of interracial social competence for all children.

Societal norms in the United States also allow for consideration of differences. For example, an important legal component of American society, equal opportunity and equal access, provides special consideration for specialized needs of minority group populations. Some children, including transracially adopted children, have such specialized needs. "In part, racial minority children may have needs that are consonant with mainstream and/or European culture. However, it is also likely that

African-American children have unique developmental needs which have gone unrecognized or oversimplified."[35] One such need may be assistance with racial socialization by a member of the child's own racial/ethnic group.

DeBerry et al., identify transracial adoptive stressors that negatively affect psychological adjustment of transracially adopted children: stresses related to the quality of the adoption experience, perceived transracial adoption stress, perceived racial stress, lack of belongingness, and racial appearance.[36]

Thus, the ultimate question may be not whether transracial adoption is "good" or "bad" for children, but, rather, what researched-based strategies can be implemented to make the experience beneficial for the children involved.

It is a valid argument that excessive debate about transracial adoption clouds the issue of weaknesses in the child welfare system. Equally valid is the belief that transracial adoption is one, albeit small, part of a solution to this overwhelming concern. Both opponents and proponents would do well to focus

[35] DeBerry et al., p. 2376.

[36] DeBerry et al.

on their areas of agreement and actively cooperate to meet the needs of children.

Conclusion

Most people recognize the deep-seated conflicts involved in transracial adoption, especially the adoption of Black children by Whites. In and of themselves, such conflicts are not, by necessity, unresolvable. As a matter of policy, full recognition of the human beings involved, as well as understanding and support for the families in all their variation and plurality, must be integral.

The future of transracial adoption lies in the interaction between all of the related concerns: for the individual, for the community, and for society. This includes utilization of the knowledge related to the differing viewpoints and the history behind them, foresight for new efforts and responsibilities, and awareness that the adult child and the family who emerge from a transracially adoptive situation may be greater than the sum of each of the racially-divided communities.

Through careful, conscientious thought and valuing of the concerns related to the individual child and his or her racial-ethnic community, policy can be formulated that is sensitive to the issues

presented here. The possibility that not all concerns may be addressed to the satisfaction of all does not negate its value; it is possible to recognize a value and regret not being able to act upon it fully.

The literature on transracial adoption suggests that children who are adopted across racial lines do well when attention is paid to their identity development as individuals, as adopted persons, and as persons of a different racial-ethnic background than their parents. In and of itself, transracial adoption is not a solution to the problem of large numbers of children awaiting permanency though the foster care system. Nor is it an attempt at a solution for the conditions that bring children into the child welfare system in the first place. What transracial adoption does is bring children together with families who will love them and provide a stable, nurturing environment.

Admittedly, the greatest challenges for parents raising children adopted transracially arise when White parents raise non-White, especially Black, children. Because of the elevated status of Caucasian people in the United States, not only are White parents unaccustomed to dealing with prejudice and its subtleties and, therefore, unequipped to help their minority group children, they

often mistakenly believe that because they themselves may be color-blind, the rest of American is also. Minority parents who adopt transracially have the advantage of a more realistic picture of racism in America.

Since race is such a defining characteristic in America, in order to raise any racially different children, parents need assistance. In many situations, that assistance must come in the form of support from members of the child's racial-ethnic community. The success of transracial adoption, then, depends upon mutual commitment from the adoptive parents and the minority community to reach out of one another, to form alliances, to offer assistance for the welfare of children–one child at a time.

For White adoptive parents, that means reaching out beyond the comfort zone to establish contacts and friendship with persons of different racial-ethnic backgrounds. For minority group members, it means practicing the "Each one, teach one" slogan that challenges every African American to take an active role in informally donating time to an African American child.[37]

In conclusion, it seems valid to suggest that despite the merits of both sides of the transracial adoption controversy and as

long as delays occur in finding same race adoptive parents for children, the following considerations take on especial importance:

1. Because of the time element that is especially critical in the life of a child, to not choose (to place a child for adoption) is to choose,

2. Choosing one stand does not negate the merits of the stand not taken, and

3. The one factor that can never be replaced at a later date is childhood.

Perhaps through the development of friendships and shared goals, persons of all races can work together to address the larger issue of children's welfare for all children regardless of race or ethnic background.

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[37] Lovett-Tisdale and Purnell.

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